

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 PHNOM 15553 01 OF 03 211511Z

51

ACTION EA-10

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SUBJ: JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE OF PRIME MINISTER AND FANK COMMANDER-
IN-CHIEF: PART II -- SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ

1. SUMMARY: ON 21 NOVEMBER IN PHNOM PENH A JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE WAS HELD BY PRIME MINISTER LONG BORET AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF FANK, LTG SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ, COVERING THE EVENTS OF THE 1974 WET SEASON CAMPAIGN. THE PRIME MINISTER'S INTRODUCTORY REMARKS WERE REPORTED IN PART I OF THIS TELEGRAM. PART II CONTAINS AND INFORMAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF GENERAL SOSTHENE'S REMARKS PREPARED BY THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION FOR DISTRIBUTION TO ENGLISH-SPEAKING NEWSMEN.

2. DECLARATION OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ.
QUOTE. AS THE WET SEASON IS DRAWING TO A CLOSE, IT BEHOOVES US TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF THE MILITARY SITUATION DURING THAT SEASON IN ORDER TO INFORM NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC OPINION OF THE REAL SITUATION IN THE KHMER REPUBLIC. MY PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY IS THIS INTENDED TO COVER THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:

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PAGE 02 PHNOM 15553 01 OF 03 211511Z

-- WHAT THE ENEMY DID DURING THE WET SEASON,

-- FANK'S REACTION TO THE ENEMY'S ACTIVITIES AND
FINALLY THE BALANCE SHEET OF ALL MILITARY OPERATIONS
DURING THAT SEASON.

3. THE ENEMY'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES DURING THE WET
SEASON. DURING THE PRECIOUS DRY SEASON THE ENEMY WAS
UNABLE TO ACHIEVE ANY SUBSTANTIAL OBJECTIVE. MOREOVER,
THEY SUFFERED HEAVY LOSSES IN MEN AS WELL AS IN ARMS, AND
THEY HAD TO FACE THE PROSPECT OF SHORTAGES OF AMMUNITION
AND FOOD SUPPLIES. FURTHERMORE, THE FACT THAT THEY
WERE UNABLE TO WIN AN IMPORTANT SUCCESS ANYWHERE IN THE
COUNTRY WAS A SERIOUS BLOW TO THE MORALE OF THE TROOPS.
IN VIEW OF THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS, THE ENEMY WAS FORCED
TO ADOPT A "PROVINCIAL STRATEGY" DESIGNED TO:

-- MAINTAIN PRESSURE AGAINST ISOLATED PROVINCIAL
CAPITALS,
-- INTERDICT ALL ROAD COMMUNICATIONS SERVING THE CAPITAL,
-- DEPLOY MAJOR DEFENSIVE EFFORTS AGAINST THE OUTPOSTS
AND LOCALITIES WHICH WERE THE MOST ISOLATED AND WEAKLY
DEFENDED BY OUR FORCES,
-- CONTINUE TO ASSURE THEIR CONTROL OF THE AREAS THEY
OCCUPIES WHILE TRYING TO ENLARGE THEM.

4. THE ENEMY HOPED TO SUCCEED TO SEIZE ONE OR TWO PRO-
VINCIAL CAPITALS. BUT BASICALLY, THEY COUNTED ON USING
THE WET SEASON PERIOD TO REORGANIZE, RECON DITION, REFIT,
REEQUIP AND BRING UP TO FULL STRENGTH THEIR PRINCIPAL
UNITS, WHILE BUILDING UP THEIR SUPPLIES IN ORDER TO END
THE SEASON IN A STATE OF READINESS FOR COMBAT AS THEY
HAD BEEN LAST DECEMBER AND JANUARY.

5. IN USING THIS STRATEGY, THE ENEMY HOPED TO PREVENT
OUR FORCES FROM EXTENDING THEIR CONTROL OUTSIDE THE PRO-
VINCIAL CAPITALS AND ALONG THE PINCIPAL NATIONAL HIGH-
WAYS BY USING TACTICS WHICH REQUIRED THE LEAST INVOLVE-
MENT OF THEIR FORCES. THEY AVOIDED CONFRONTATIONS BY
THEIR TROOPS WITH OUR LARGE UNITS WHOSE SUPERIOR FIRE
POWER AND MANEUVERABILITY PLACED THEM IN A VERY DIS-
ADVANTAGEOUS SITUATION.

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PAGE 03 PHNOM 15553 01 OF 03 211511Z

6. FANK'S REACTION TO THE ENEMY'S ACTIVITIES. FANK'S
OBJECTIVES DURING THE SAME PERIOD WERE IN A MANNER THE
MIRROR IMAGE OF THOSE OF THE ENEMY. OUR FORCES TRIED TO
MAINTAIN AND REINFORCE THEIR CONTROL OF THE GROUND AND
RIVERINE SUPPLY LINES, TO EXTEND THE DEFENSE PERIMETERS
AROUND PHNOM PENH AND OTHER PROVINCIAL CAPITALS, TO OB-
TAIN ADDITIONAL AGRICULTURAL LANDS, AND TO ENSURE THE
TRAINING AND REEQUIPMENT OF OUR OWN TROOPS. FANK EN-

DEAVORED TO ASSURE THE SECURITY OF REFUGEES FLEEING THE ENEMY AREAS. OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS WERE CONDUCTED TO DRIVE THE ENEMY OUT OF THE AREAS THEY OCCUPIED AND TO PREVENT THEM FROM REEQUIPPING, RECONDITIONING, RE-SUPPLYING AND REBUILDING THEIR FORCES.

7. ANALYSIS OF THE SUCCESSES AND FAILURES OF THE ENEMY DURING THE WET SEASON.

A. OUDONG-LOVEK-PART OF ROUTE 5. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE LAST DRY SEASON, THE ENEMY HAD CONCENTRATED THEIR FORCES IN THE TRIANGLE COMPRISING OUDONG-LOVEK, ROUTE 5 (LOWER PART) NORTHWEST OF THE CAPITAL, IN ORDER TO STOP THE ADVANCE OF OUR FORCES TOWARD THE NORTH IN THE DIRECTION OF LOVEK. BUT ACCORDING TO VARIOUS INTELLIGENCE SOURCES -- PRISONERS, RALLIERS, REFUGEES, CAPTURED DOCUMENTS -- THE ENEMY EXPERIENCED DIFFICULTIES OWING TO SHORTAGES OF AMMUNITION AND MEDICINES, TO AN INCREASING DESERTION RATE, AND TO POOR COMMAND PERFORMANCES.

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PAGE 01 PHNOM 15553 02 OF 03 211521Z

51

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 USIE-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

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TAGS:PFOR, PINT, MOPS, CB

SUBJ: JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE OF PRIME MINISTER AND FANK COMMANDER-

IN-CHIEF: PART II -- SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ

BY JULY THEY HAD SUFFERED A SEIOUS REVERSAL.THEIR TROOPS RETREATED BEFORE THE ADVANCE OF OUR UNITS MOVING TO LINK UP WITH LOVEK. OUR FORCES RETOOK OUDONG, A PLACE CERTAINLY OF LITTLE STRATEGIC VALUE BUT OF GREAT POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE. AT THE END OF AUGUST THE ENEMY SUFFERED A MAJOR DEFEAT: FANK WAS IN FIRM CONTROL OF THE OUDONG-LOVEK-ROUTE 5 TRIANGLE REGION.

B. BATTAMBANG PROVINCE. BEING AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF BATTAMBANG, THE RICE GRAINARY OF THE KHMER REPUBLIC ECONOMY, THE ENEMY UNDERTOOK, IN JUNE AND JULY, A SERIES OF ATTACKS AGAINST SMALL GOVERNMENT POSTS WHICH WERE ISOLATED AND WEAKLY DEFENDED. SOME OF THESE POSTS FELL UNDER THESE BLOWS. BUT FANK REACTED BY CONDUCTING CLEARING OPERATIONS. SUFFERING FROM SHORTAGES OF UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 PHNOM 15553 02 OF 03 211521Z

AMMUNITIONS AND FOOD SUPPLIES, AS WAS THE CASE IN MANY OTHER AREAS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, THE ENEMY IN FACT DID NOT ACHIEVE GOOD RESULTS IN BATTAMBANG.

C. MUK KAMPOUL. THE ENEMY ATTEMPTED TO GAIN CONTROL OF MUK KAMPOUL, THE POINT OF CONVERGENCE OF THE TONLE SAP AND MEKONG RIVERS, BY BRINGING IMPORTANT FORCES INTO THIS REGION. CONTROL OF THIS AREA WOULD HAVE PERMITTED THE ENEMY TO INTERDICT USE OF THE TWO RIVERS. THE ENEMY COULD ALSO AHVE USED THIS AREA TO PREPARE FUTURE ATTACKS EITHER AGAINST THE CAPITAL OR AGAINST THE AREA OF LOVEK FARTHER TO THE NORTHWEST. BUT THE COMBINATION OF A PROMPT REACTION BY FANK AND THE BIG SEASONAL FLOODING OF THE AREA DUE TO HIGH WATER IN THE MEKONG THWARTED THE ENEMY'S EFFORTS TO USE THIS AREA DURING THE WET SEASON.

D. ROUTE 4, DAS KANCHOR - PICH NIL. IN THIS AREA, THE WET SEASON CAMPAIGN BEGAN WITH A FULL SCALE, COMBINED FORCES OPERATION IN JULY ALONG ROUTE 4 WEST OF KOMPONG SPEU WITH THE AIM OF CUTTING AND OBSTRUCTING THE ENEMY'S RESUPPLY ROUTES AND ALSO IN ORDER TO LINK UP WITH THE GARRISON AT DAS KANCHOR. CAUGHT BY SURPRISE BY THIS OPERATION, THE ENEMY SUFFERED HEAVY LOSSES AND FEARED THAT OUR FORCES MIGHT EVEN BE ABLE TO PROCEED AS FAR AS THE BESIEGED GARRISON AT KOMPONG SEILA. THUS THE ENEMY EFFECTED A LARGE SCALE MOVEMENT OF FORCES FROM THE OUDONG-LOVEK AREA IN THE NORTH AND FROM THE KOMPONG SEILA AREA IN THE SOUTHWEST AND CONCENTRATED TO THE WEST OF DAS KANCHOR IN AN ATTEMPT TO STOP THE FANK AD-

VANCE TOWARD THE PICH NIL PASS.

THE RESULT AT THE END OF THIS WET SEASON CAMPAIGN APPEARS TO BE A RETURN TO THE STATUS QUO. THIS CAMPAIGN RESULTED IN MOVING THE ENEMY FROM ITS COUNTEROFFENSIVE POSTURE TO ONE OF "ACTIVE DEFENSE" NEVERTHELESS, KOMPONG SEILA AND DAS KANCHOR ARE NOW ISOLATED AND MUST BE RESUPPLIED BY AIR.

E. UPPER BASSAC AREA. IN AUGUST FANK LAUNCHED ITS GREATEST WET SEASON OFFENSIVE IN THIS SECTOR. THE ENEMY HAD TO WITHDRAW THEIR BEST TROOPS FROM THE OUDONG-
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 PHNOM 15553 02 OF 03 211521Z

LOVEK AREA IN ORDER TO BLOCK FANK OPERATIONS ALONG THE WEST BANK OF THE BASSAC.

THANKS TO THE ARTILLERY AND THE AIR FORCE, FANK CAUSED THE ENEMY TO SUFFER MUCH HEAVIER CASUALTIES THAN ITS OWN. ALTHOUGH FANK WAS NOT ABLE TO CONSOLIDATE COMPLETELY THEIR ENLARGED DEFENSE PERIMETER, FANK SUCCEEDED IN IMPROVING THE SECURITY OF THE SOUTHEAST SECTOR AND IN RETAKING A GOOD PORTION OF THE RICH AGRICULTURAL LAND OF THE UPPER BASSAC AND OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED THERE. WITH RARE EXCEPTIONS PHNOM PENH WAS PROTECTED FROM ROCKET ATTACKS COMING FROM THIS DIRECTION DURING ALL THIS PERIOD.

F. SIEM REAP. "OPERATION 802" LAUNCHED BY FANK PERMITTED THE RETAKING OF THE ANCIENT TEMPLES OF ROLUOS. THE OPERATION, WHICH AT FIRST ENJOYED SUCCESS DURING THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER, IN THE END RESULTED IN A RETURN TO THE STATUS QUO ALONG THE SAME LINES THAT EXISTED BEFORE THE OPERATION BEGAN. THIS FANK INITIATIVE ENABLED US TO REDUCE ENEMY PRESSURE AGAINST KOMPONG CHAM AND KOMPONG THOM.

G. PHNOM PENH-NORTHWEST SECTOR. THE OPERATION LAUNCHED BY FANK TOWARD THE END OF AUGUST TO CLEAR THE AREA WEST OF TUOL LEAP DID NOT PRODUCE THE ANTICIPATED RESULTS, SINCE THE ENEMY SUCCEEDED IN BLOCKING ALL OUR INITIATIVES IN THIS AREA.

H. KOMPONG CHHNANG-ROUTE 5. AT THE BEGINNING OF SEPTEMBER THE ENEMY WAS SERIOUSLY THREATENING THE AREA OF KOMPONG CHHNANG. BUT THE PRINCIPAL ENEMY EFFORT WAS NOT DIRECTED AGAINST THE TOWN OF KOMPONG CHHNANG ITSELF BUT AGAINST ROUTE 5, THE SUPPLY ROUTE FOR FOOD AND OTHER PRODUCE COMING FROM BATTAMBANG TO PHNOM PENH. THE CUTTING OF THIS ROUTE WOULD HAVE RESULTED IN THE ISOLATION OF KOMPONG CHHNANG. AFTER HAVING BEEN CUT SEVERAL TIMES, ROUTE 5 HAS NOW BEEN

REOPENED, AND THE FIRST CONVOY OF MORE THAN 100 TRUCKS

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PAGE 01 PHNOM 15553 03 OF 03 211512Z

51

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 USIE-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8368

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UNCLAS SECTION 3 OF 3 PHNOM PENH 15553

STATE PASS USIA FOR IBS, IPS

TRAVELLED FROM BATTAMBANG TO KOMPONG CHHNANG WITHOUT
INCIDENT ON NOVEMBER 10.

I. SVAY RIENG. LOCATED IN THE "PARROT'S BEAK",
SVAY RIENG HAS FOR A LONG TIME BEEN INFESTED BY NVN-VC
UNITS AS WELL AS BY FORCES OF THE KHMER ROUGE.
DURING THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER THE ENEMY BEGAN TO MASS
MAJOR FORCES AROUND THE TOWN OF SVAY RIENG. THE
ENEMY'S PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE WAS APPARENTLY TO SEIZE THE
TOWN OF PRASAUT AND TO EXERT PRESSURE ON THE DEFENSE
PERIMETER (NOW EXTENDED) OF SVAY RIENG. THE ATTACKS
WERE CONTINUOUS. THE ENEMY SUFFERED MUCH GREATER
CASUALTIES THAN THE FANK DEFENDERS.
THERE WILL BE NO CHANGE IN THE SITUATION AT SVAY RIENG
IN THE NEAR FUTURE. SVAY RIENG IS PREPARED TO COUNTER
ANY ENEMY ATTACK, CONTRARY TO THE CLAIMS OF THE GRUNK
PRESS AGENCY WHICH HAS BEEN PREDICTING ITS IMMINENT FALL.

J. AREAS WHICH WERE QUIET DURING THE WET SEASON.

(A) PREY VENG: THE BRAVERY OF THE DEFENDERS TURNED

ASIDE ALL DANGERS COMING FROM THE ENEMY.

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PAGE 02 PHNOM 15553 03 OF 03 211512Z

(B) TAKEO: BETWEEN 80 AND 90 PERCENT OF THE ENGAGEMENTS WERE INITIATED BY FANK AND RESULTED IN EXTENDING THE DEFENSE PERIMETER.

(C) KOMPONG THOM: ONE OF THE CAPITALS WHERE REFUGEES BY THE THOUSANDS CAME OVER TO THE AREA UNDER FANK CONTROL.

(D) KOMPONG SOM AND KAMPOT: VERY LITTLE MILITARY ACTIVITY.

(E) KOMPONG CHAM.

(F) ODDAR MEANCHEY: ALL THESE AREAS WERE AND REMAIN UNDER THE CONTROL OF FANK.

8. THIS ACCOUNT OF THE WET SEASON CAMPAIGN WOULD NOT BE COMPLETE IF I DID NOT MENTION THE KHMER AIR FORCE WHICH PLAYS AN ESSENTIAL ROLE WITH ITS BOMBING AND RECONNAISSANCE MISSIONS.

9. THE EXCELLENT COORDINATION BETWEEN THE KAF AND GROUND FORCE OPERATIONS HAS OFTEN RESULTED IN HEAVY CASUALTIES TO THE ENEMY. HAVING AUGMENTED ITS TRANSPORT AND AIR DROP CAPABILITIES, THE KAF HAS PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN SUPPLYING AND SUPPORTING THE GROUND FORCES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

10. AS FOR THE KHMER NATIONAL NAVY, ITS ESSENTIAL ROLE IS THE PROTECTION OF CONVOYS. FOUR TO FIVE CONVOYS MOVE UP THE MEKONG EACH MONTH FROM THE VIETNAMESE COAST AS FAR AS PHNOM PENH WITHOUT SERIOUS LOSS. THE NAVY ESCORTS CONVOYS BETWEEN KOMPONG CHHNANG AND THE CAPITAL, A PASSAGE WHICH IS PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS. DURING THE HIGH WATER PERIOD, THE NAVY ACHIEVED A MAJOR RESUPPLY EFFORT TO PREY VENG. AN IMPORTANT CONVOY WAS ESTABLISHED ON THE GREAT LAKE COMING FROM SIEM REAP TO KOMPONG CHHNANG AND THEN PHNOM PENH. ON MANY OCCASIONS THE NAVY ASSISTED THE MOVEMENT OF FANK TROOPS AND THE RESUPPLY AND EQUIPMENT OF GROUND FORCES, AS FOR EXAMPLE THE TRANSPORT OF ARMORED VEHICLES FOR THE REOPENING OF ROUTE 5.

11. I COULD DWELL AT LENGTH ON THE ACTIVITIES OF OUR FANK. BUT THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT FANK THWARTED THE ENEMY'S PLANS DURING THE WET SEASON IN PRACTICALLY EVERY REGION OF THE COUNTRY BY TAKING THE INITIATIVE AND FORCING THE ENEMY TO THE DEFENSIVE.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 PHNOM 15553 03 OF 03 211512Z

ING THE ENEMY TO REACT STRONGLY IN ORDER TO PROTECT THEIR SO-CALLED "LIBERATED" AREAS.

12. THE ENEMY DID NOT SUCCEED IN MAINTAINING THE INITIATIVE AND IN KEEPING OUR PRINCIPAL SUPPLY ROUTES CUT.

13. THE ENEMY FORCES WERE UNABLE TO COUNTER FANK OPERATIONS WITH THEIR LOCAL UNITS AND HAD TO MOVE LARGER FORCES FROM OTHER MORE IMPORTANT AREAS IN THE ATTEMPT. THE BALANCE SHEET IS TO THE DISADVANTAGE OF THE ENEMY. IN SHORT, THE ENEMY LOST BETWEEN 2,500 AND 3,000 KILLED WHICH WOULD APPEAR TO ANNUL THEIR RECRUITMENT DURING THE DRY SEASON. AS FOR THE BALANCE BETWEEN TERRITORIAL GAINS AND LOSSES, THE ENEMY IN ACTUAL FACT LOST GROUND IN THE OUDONG-LOVEK-ROUTE 5 TRIANGLE, IN THE UPPER BASSAC, AND IN THE SVAY RIENG PROVINCES. OF COURSE, THE ENEMY GAINED A BIT IN THE SECTORS TO THE SOUTH AND WEST OF THE KOMPONG CHHNANG PERIMETER. BUT FINALLY, THE ENEMY FAILED IN ALL THEIR EFFORTS TO EXTEND THEIR TERRITORIAL POSSESSIONS AND TO INCREASE THE POPULATION UNDER THEIR CONTROL AND THAT WAS THE CASE IN ALL MAJOR REGIONS OF THE COUNTRY.

14. ON THE EVE OF THE DRY SEASON THE ENEMY WILL FIND US READY TO PARRY ALL THE ATTACKS THAT THEY CAN MOUNT AGAINST US. END QUOTE.
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